

Cobwebs

by turn2stone

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Summary: Never in his life had he thought Arthur would be more concerned about the cobwebs than his magic

1. Prologue

****Not mine. Plot bunny attacked at the crack of dawn. Might continue if attack persists.****

"What are you doing?"

"Errâ€¦ ummâ€¦ cleaning?" _he_ squeaked. Oh this was bad. Very bad. Terribly, horribly, extremely bad.

"Cleaning?" ****his**** tone was laced with disbelief. ****He**** casually leaned against the doorway, blocking the only exit. ****His**** demeanour- calm and relaxed; as if this was a mundane conversation like no other.

He was frozen. _He_ was dead. Well not yet- but soon. Public and long; or private and quick? Looking at ****him****; _he'd_ bet the later. _He_ should open _his_ mouth; use _his_ words: explain. But ****his**** stare was unnerving; ****his**** stance deceptively casual. If ****he**** wanted _him_ dead, _he_ would have been dead by now, right? Or was ****he**** waiting for _him_ to dig _his_ own grave? To try and escape? If ****he**** killed _him_ what would ****he**** tell their friends? Will they feel that ****he**** was justified? Wait, ****he**** was still talkingâ€¦ what did ****he**** say? Did ****he**** deliver _his_ eulogy?

Splat

Ow! _His_ face met ****his**** riding glove. Eeww! They were smelly. What had ****he**** been putting ****his**** hands into? _He_ would have to have them cleaned, maybe lace them with lavender again- just to annoyâ€¦

"Are you even listening to what I am saying?" **he** demanded.

"No?"

"Well obviously. Lord knows you never listen. A decade of **friendship** yet I can't get you to be on time nor listen to me!"

"You would get bored otherwise," he clapped his hands to his mouth. He had not meant that! Well, he had, for that was his usual response. Banter and comebacks. But this was definitely not the time- when he was desperately trying to keep his head. But did **he** say friendship? Does that mean no death? Only banishment maybe? Or did it mean that the deception was too high to ensure a painless death?

"Aaaand I have lost you again, MERLIN!"

"Sire?"

"Tell me have you always been lazy?"

"I'm not," he mumbled in a daze.

"Then tell me dear **friend**, in all the years you have been cleaning my chambers with magic; why have you never magicked those cobwebs away? I swear Merlin the only other place with worse cobwebs is the vaults," **he** smirked.

He gaped! That. Utter. Idiotic. Dallophheaded. Clotpole. Of. A. King! **He** was enjoying this! Gleefully having **his** fun while he was having a heart attack! That ASS! He was going to turn **him** into a proper donkey! With a swishy tail! But first- "So, I have magic?"

"Really Merlin? I didn't notice the bedclothes setting themselves up, nor the papers arranging themselves," **he** snorted.

"You seem to be taking it quite well," he said.

"Yet you haven't managed to get rid of the cobwebs I see," **he** sighed.

"Why are you so obsessed with the cobwebs?"

"What's the use of you having magic if you can't even clean my chambers properly?"

"My magic is not for cleaning your chambers," he grouched.

"Yet your actions suggest otherwise. When you are done with my chambers I need you to go over this speech for me and polish it," **he** said as **he** shoved a scroll in his hands and picked up **his** gloves before proceeding out the door.

"Wait!"

He looked back.

"Give me your gloves, they stink."

****He**** handed them over- saying, "If you douse them in lavender again I will have you mucking the stables for a whole month."

With that ****he**** left ****his**** ****friend**** who also happened to be a _not so secret sorcerer,_ dazed and perplexed; mumbling, "I must be dreaming, or ****he**** must be possessed. At least I'm not dead. That's good. But ****he's**** an idiot. A Royal Pain! Just for that I'll lace ****his**** gloves with jasmine instead- much stronger fragrance!"

2. Arthur Enchanted

****So with the sneak peek/ prologueâ€| here comes the real story.****

When Arthur had _graciously_ given Merlin two weeks off to visit his Mother, he had not expected his world to turn upside down when he returned. Everything had seemed fine when he had left Camelot and coming back the first thing he saw was the abysmal state of Arthur's chambers. You needed to hand it to the King- it took a special kind of skill to turn a room into a pig sty! It almost brought him to tears. So with the King safely tucked away with his council, he did what he had sworn never ever to do- he used magic to speed up the process so that he could finish the mountain of chores that King Prat had handed him as a Welcome Home present.

Though now it seemed his Welcome Home would soon be followed with his swift execution- for there was Arthur in all his Kingly glory while his room set itself up under Merlin's magical supervision. He was shocked, he was frozen, he was petrified. All he could think was: at least I did get to see my Mother one last time. He would die in Arthur's hands. All his life, he had dreamt of the ways of his coming out to Arthur- but this blatant display of magic in the King's very chambers was definitely nowhere in the charts. He had envisioned a heroic display of magic- saving lives (as usual)- as his big reveal and thus showing Arthur the truth about magic. But no- it had to be a mundane, stupid mistake! He was headed for the gallows; or he might just be meeting the business end of Excalibur.

His inner monologue came to a standstill when Arthur called him lazy and started berating him for the cobwebs. _Cobwebs? Cobwebsâ€| yes there were some at the corners. Funny, he was sure there were no cobwebs there two weeks ago. Those cobwebs needed to be removed. He really needed to be more efficient, maybe Arthur was right for once. ****Cobwebs****! _****Arthur****! Was that all he had to say? No speeches on how Merlin had betrayed him? On the evils of sorcery? On their broken friendship? Had the King finally gone mad? Had his numerous blows to the head finally broken him? Was he enchanted? Was he possessed? In his dazed and confused state he could only blindly follow as the King had instructed before he left. He vanished away the cobwebs (no matter what Arthur said; they were not that bad!) and read through the scroll. Which actually had him running the length and breadth of first, the citadel and then, the whole of Camelot; because he was surely hallucinating. He could not have read what he thought he had read. He had to find Arthur- he _must_ be under some spell.

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After hours of searching he finally found the King of Camelot at the one place where he was sure the _real_ Arthur would never ever step in- the library. Arthur was surrounded by a pile of books and scrolls- and what do you know he was glaring and pouting at them. This only re-enforced his belief that his friend was enchanted. Determined, he strode forward and grabbed the imposter by the face. He then brought his face close to Arthur's- close enough to brush against his nose and gazed deeply into his eyes.

"Merlin if you kiss me to show your gratitude, I _will_ kill you," said the imposter in irritation.

"Who are you? What have you done to the King?" growled Merlin.

"I _am_ the King!" Arthur exclaimed in disbelief.

"**Lies**! Stop possessing my friend," with that shout Merlin's eyes flashed the tell-tale golden hue; but alas nothing changed.

"You _idiot_! I _am_ Arthur! And I _am_ in my right mind! For being touted as the _greatest_ warlock ever, you sure are dumb," Arthur cried as he shook off Merlin's grasp.

"Huh? You're not possessed," Merlin looked confused. "Maybe it's an enchantment then."

"It's _nothing_! After all these years, after all that we have gone through together; do you have absolutely **no** faith in me? Is it so impossible to comprehend that you and your actions wouldn't be capable to make me look at magic at a different light? You always told me I am **not** my Father. Was that all just talk? Did you never really believe that?" Arthur sounded hurt.

"Oh," speechless, Merlin slumped against the wall. "Oh!" he gazed at Arthur in wonder and disbelief.

"What do you know, for once _I_ have managed to leave you speechless," chuckled Arthur as he savoured the feeling. "You alright? Can you now take a conversation without being dramatic?"

"Iâ€¦ Yesâ€¦ I thinkâ€¦ It's justâ€¦ I neverâ€¦ I meanâ€¦" Merlin trailed off weakly.

"Tell you what, why don't we retire to my room to talk? That way you can use the journey to collect your thoughts," Arthur said somewhat kindly as he strode to the door.

Merlin shook himself from his revive and followed after Arthur.

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It was not just Merlin who needed to collect their thoughts. With his original plan completely demolished; Arthur hoped he could work out a proper conversation for Merlin. Lord knew he deserved that much and much more. But he himself was not ready- he had hoped to have more time. He had even sent Merlin off to his Mother's for _two_ whole

weeks_! Two weeks of no Merlin. Two weeks of George and his proper, uptight ways and brass jokes. Arthur shuddered. He had endured it all, strived through it only for his friend. He had always pictured handling the situation with finesse and contentment but _no,_ trust that idiot to mess up his wonderful big reveal. The first thing he does after coming back is use magic to cheat on his chores! That was not fair, _at all_! He had piled up work for Merlin just so he had the time and space to work on his plan alone. The last thing he had wanted was for Merlin to get curious and stick to his side as usual. Maybe he should have sent Merlin away for a month instead.

Nevertheless, now he would have to work with what he had and hope for the best. He never wanted to see that look of terror and disbelief grace his friend's face ever again if he could help it. At that time he was so not ready to have 'the talk', so he had used his usual banter and humour to subtly try and show Merlin that nothing had changed. Then he had fled to the dreaded library (who he had been seeing a lot more than his own _wife_ the past few weeks- talk about commitment!) to sulk at his spoiled plans. He had hoped when Merlin would finally turn up he would be joyous and relieved; and maybe then they could have the much needed conversation. But when Merlin finally did turn up (after several hours- he had at one point wondered if his friend had fled the city); he accused him of being under a spell. And that hurt even more. He didn't know if he should cry or tear his hair out!

The nerve of that idiot- and all because he wanted to do something nice!

But he was the King after all. His duty to his people came first. He would keep aside his hurt and work through his friend's lifelong secret first.

Then maybe put him in the stocks for ruining a perfectly good plan!

Yes that sounded fair.

3. I'll stand by you

So this is the long waited talk. I have tried my best to make it original. BTW LC challenged me that no matter what I wrote could not make the chapter longer than 900 wordsâ€¦| In your face! 1900+ words! Whoo Hoo!

"Talk," Merlin commanded, the moment they were seated in Arthur's chambers.

"Merlin, I'm still King. I give the orders around here," Arthur shot back. But he only received an unimpressed look from Merlin.

"Like now I would start listening to you. You can't expect to hand me a missive about changing the laws regarding magic so casually and expect me not to have questions. This is very unprecedented," Merlin shrugged.

"Yes, it does seem rather out of the blue doesn't it? Well let me assure you it is not. In fact I have spent more than a year working

on it. This is a matter of great importance and delicacy and I had to make sure that my reasons were solid. Springing it on you out of the blue was never my intention; but believe me, I have your best interests in my heart. So give me the opportunity to explain and everything will be clear. All I ask is you don't interrupt till I am done," said Arthur.

Merlin nodded. He was pleasantly surprised how matured Arthur sounded. It looked as if his destiny was already within his grasp. He was proud of his friend: The Once and Future King. Now Albion will rise and magic will flow free in the land all because Arthur was now ready to take up the mantle.

"You could say all this started when we confronted Morgana last year; she told me that even Emrys would not be able to save me. At that time I let it go- but I realised later that I seemed to be blessed when confronting magic. It was like I had an angel watching over me- guiding me. It seemed even Morgana thought so. So I wondered who Emrys would be. Then I remembered how Gaius said he was protecting a sorcerer and had hinted that he may want to keep me safe. To be honest, at first I thought it to be preposterous. I mean which magic user would in their right mind want to help me?" Arthur shook his head as he sank further into his seat.

"Even when I acted on my Father's orders, I still killed many of their kind. But then I am not my father. Guilt by association or without proof is not something I condone. You have always told me to do what I believe to be right and to be honest- this I will deny till my dying breath- I ought to listen to you more," Arthur glared at Merlin's gleeful look.

"Actually I do listen to you. It was your unshaken faith in me that made me wonder. Wonder if I somehow managed to gain favour with a crazy sorcerer; especially after I made peace with the druids. So I went searching, alone. I thought it would be safer that way and something told me Gaius would believe that I being in the dark was actually better. But I had no luck for days. At times I even thought of giving the search up altogether. Surely he did not want to be found; and with the laws in place, I may be condemning him to his death. But I just couldn't let go, the mystery was nagging me as if it was an itch I just had to scratch. Then one day it seemed that luck just fell into my lap. I was in the lower town when I heard a voice behind me say: The days of the Once and Future King draws near, you have not failed yet Emrys. I froze there. It was like all my answers were just within my reach and I latched onto the voice. I think I terrified that poor druid woman then- she must have thought I was insane or I was going to kill her. I begged and made promises but she was mum. I told her that it was hinted to me by more than one person that I had someone with magic watching over me and that I wanted to understand how he could bear to serve a person with such a bloody history. I wanted to know how could he have such blind faith in me- he did not know me. I promised her; I wished him no ill, I only wanted to understand. She finally asked me what I would do if she refused my request."

Arthur took a deep breath and held Merlin's gaze.

"I told her: nothing for I didn't believe I had the right to demand anything of her. She asked for time to think and asked me to come back two days hence. And then she hugged me! She hugged the King of

Camelot in the open streets, Merlin. I did not know how to respond. That was the last thing I would have expected from a druid!" Arthur looked at Merlin with wide eyes when he laughed at his King's discomfort.

"When I next met her she told me she didn't know who Emrys was but she knew what he stood for. She told me of the prophecy, of how he was supposed to be the beacon of hope for magic- he would bring back magic to Albion- the land that he and I would build together, fair for all with and without magic. She told me of days before the Purge when magic flowed through the land and what it entailed. She told me how my Father won Camelot by the aid of magic- it's true, I have confirmed this from Geoffrey. You can imagine my shock Merlin. I ordered him to give me the facts about Camelot's history that I was not aware of- I think he was secretly pleased. Magic had been in the very foundations of Camelot did you know? Our prosperity was stunted with the Purge," Arthur raged.

"And Ela- her name is Ela by the way- had to flee Camelot when the Purge started. She didn't even have magic- her only fault being she grew up in a druid camp. She left back her family, her new born babe- only to be able to come see them after they were all grown up. My Father did that Merlin, he tore away families- where is greatness there? I could not fault her resentment- but she was only grateful. She had faith in the son of the person who tormented her. She thanked me for making peace with the druids."

Merlin smiled witnessing his King's astonishment. Even if the event had occurred a while back, thinking about it still seemed to cause Arthur disbelief.

Arthur continued, "I don't think I could have been ever so forgiving, Merlin. I felt both touched and ashamed. But I am getting off the track. We were talking about Emrys."

"The way Ela spoke of him, you would think he walked on water. He was their saviour, their hope. But they thought maybe his struggles were futile and I would not acknowledge his worth," Arthur said sadly.

"She kept begging me to remember that what he did was all for me- he swore fealty to me. He was my guide in troubled times, my confidant. He hid his true self so that I could become a better King. He sacrificed everything for me- to become my shadow. Till then I was not thinking about you- I was thinking of Gaius when she said Emrys was my guide. I actually went to confront him," Arthur mused.

"But then when it comes to shadows- Merlin, you are a leech! You never leave my side. You followed Guinevere and me on our honeymoon! So by the time I reached Gaius the only thing that came out of my mouth was: I know Merlin is Emrys."

Merlin stared at Arthur in shock. Arthur confronted Gaius? When? Why was he not told? More importantly, what was Arthur thinking? Gaius was getting on in his years and Arthur had not been particularly subtle- how had Gaius reacted?

Arthur simply smiled at him, "If I had doubts then they all vanished when I nearly caused him to collapse. Oh, don't make that face Merlin. It was a big shock for me too. I was playing it by the ear- I

did not have a plan. But his actions confirmed what I needed to know- my friend, my guide, my advisor- was you; always you. It took me a while to assure Gaius that I meant you no harm- I only wanted to help you."

"Help?" asked Merlin, cocking his head puzzled.

Huh what do you know, Arthur thought: all these years living with Gaius had apparently rubbed off on Merlin. They even reacted in the same manner now.

"Yes. You have been by my side all these years. Whenever I had doubts, whenever I faltered- you were there. Even when I had nothing, you were the constant in my life. You have changed me for the better. You believed in me and my destiny. You made me worthy of being called the Once and Future King. In fact, you were the first one to call me by that title. I feel honoured by the faith you have put in me."

Arthur's declaration brought tears to Merlin's eyes. Never in his wildest dreams had he dared to believe that Arthur would react this way. He always feared his magic would break his friend's faith in him. Instead this was like all his dreams coming true and more. He could hardly believe it.

Arthur smiled softly at him. His eyes held untold promises.

"You have sacrificed a lot for me. It stops now. From now on I will be ****your**** guide to help you recognize your destiny. I will help you embrace your true self- be Emrys. On longer shall you shy away from magic for my sake. Albion won't come to be if you don't embrace your duty towards magic."

What? Wait! What?

Merlin's feeling of euphoria crashed down. What did Arthur mean? Embrace destiny? Him? Merlin? Duty towards magic? Arthur was joking right? How did he even come up with that conclusion? Wait was he still speaking?

"Merlin, Merlin!" Arthur gave him an understanding look.

"I understand this must be a shock for you but I promise, now you can use your gifts. You don't have to deny who you are. I understand all these years you have turned away from magic and at times have even taken my side against magic. This will stop now. You can now study and practice magic. Real magic- not just tricks for cleaning. With these new laws that I have drafted, you can finally embrace your magical side. You have done so much for me and now I can help on your path to discover magic," Arthur said with a grin.

"Just imagine Merlin, next time we come across Morgana you could actually pose a challenge for her!" Arthur looked giddy with joy.

THAT USLESS PRAT!

It was official now. Arthur was a fool. He was blind and pompous and arrogant; and so full of himself!

How could he be the Once and Future King if he was so clueless? The makers of the prophecy had to have made a mistake- now he was sure of it.

What was he thinking? Did he really believe all these years Merlin never used magic?

PREPOSTEROUS!

Quelling his thoughts, he composed his face so that none of his intentions were reflected. He then faced Arthur's stupidly, self-satisfied features. Wordlessly he looked deep into his eyes, his feelings threatening to boil over: Eyes turning gold, he let his magic speak for him.

End
file.